

Reminisce by linkami1379

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Summary:

Verb: to indulge in enjoyable recollection of past events.

Steve was haunted and exhausted. Billy was taking his life into his own hands.

Under the right set of circumstances, some foundations can be overcome, and something better can grow. It's freeing to reminisce over such things.

Note: Underage because Billy is 17 and Steve is 18.

Reminisce

Author's Note:

Okay, it's my new obsession!! Yay!! And yes, I woke up at 4:30 this morning to work on homework, was successful until 8am, and then had a stroke of inspiration to write this as I was listening to Elvis' "Can't Help Falling in Love with You".

So you here go. It's fluffy. I gave Steve the hurts. Billy is probably OOC (what's new with my "bad character" characterizations in my writing? Nothing).

Have ideas of how to add a part two, but I also need to work on med-surg reading and modules. So.

Steve wondered briefly when this situation had become possible.

He stood against the wall; wine in hand, an onlooker on his own life. Elvis was playing in the background, not helping with his nostalgic mood. The kids were essentially emptying the pool outside. Nancy and Jonathan were sitting together away from the splash zone (debatable), Nancy staring at the pool with quiet contemplation as Jonathan took picture after picture. Joyce sat with her feet in the water, her bravery awarded with a soaking and a damp cigarette. Steve's father hadn't made it for the graduation party. However, Steve's mother, Susan, was lavishly dressed and having what appeared to be an intense conversation with one Billy Hargrove. It was still strange to see his rugged form leaning against the kitchen counter, tight jeans stretching over hard thighs.

Steve knew he was being a piss-poor host at his own graduation party. Granted, it was also in honor of Jonathan and Billy, but that was beside the point. He was lost in a bought of reminiscence and contemplation. Events like this had that effect on him, these days.

Though Steve's thoughts fluttered over the savage nightmare he experienced last night, they settled firmly on the entirety of Billy Hargrove. After the events last November (eg. Getting his face beat in

by the man standing across the room and being responsible for four intelligent and passionate hooligans), Steve had expected the Normal Interactions of Steve and Billy to continue. They did not.

At first, Billy began with avoidance. Steve was wary, but grateful. Then, at the Snowball, Steve watched him drop off Max and happened to lock eyes with the blond. Billy held his gaze, and Steve felt searched, and almost guilty for whatever Billy found. Billy nodded, and then drove away in a blaze of exhaust and squealing tires.

The obligatory nods to each other in the hall and after practice ensued. Steve was surprised, to say the least, but he went with it. He considered telling Nancy and Jonathan, but it somehow felt fragile. Like if anyone else knew about the thin truce that hung between them, it wouldn't hold. Nonetheless, people noticed, and began to whisper how the two Kings of Hawkins High came to act so suspiciously. Steve was glad no one asked him directly because he had no idea what he would've said.

Billy began to shout at him during practice. Steve began to look forward to the attention.

“Plant your feet, Harrington!”

“Open on your left, Harrington!”

“Come on man, get your ass up.”

The first time Billy extended a hand to Steve in the middle of a game against Ben Davis, Steve accepted it without a second thought.

At some point, Billy told Steve to meet him at the quarry. To this day, Steve can't recall if the hand that stopped him in his tracks was rough or gentle or if Billy's tone had been cruel or not. All he can see today are Billy's eyes, saying much more than, “meet me at the quarry tonight, 11 o'clock, pretty boy. Don't be late.” They were the first personal words Billy had given Steve since their fight. Somehow, Steve hadn't even questioned if he was going to go or not.

That led to a particularly memorable March night, where Steve found

himself at the quarry at 11:30pm on the hood of his Beamer with Billy beside him. It was quiet at first. Steve was exhausted from a week of restless nights. The one before had been particularly bad, and Steve had woken with a sharp fear that he was going to be sick. The fear he felt now, of falling asleep, was dull and throbbing; it was tired.

“What’s eating you, Harrington,” Billy had said, somehow making the question a statement as he dragged long on his smoke. Steve shrugged, unable to go through the mental cycle of how to respond, how to weave the lie into words. Unable to keep the memory of his own ragged breaths raking across his throat as he realized he couldn’t get Dustin to safety. Billy grunted and shifted on the hood, his thigh pressing into Steve’s. It was warm. “Figured,” Billy muttered. Steve rolled his eyes.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“No reason to tell me anything,” Billy said, clearing his throat. His tone became brittle in the chilly air. “No need to be here right now. Is it pity? King Steve consoling the stray?”

Steve was both confused and angry, but there was also a sliver of surprise at his own heave of emotion. Steve hissed through his teeth. “I’m not here out of *pity*,” he said, spitting the last word with something akin to loathing. Steve felt a burning in the pit of his stomach, a churning that he hadn’t experienced in weeks. *Count on Billy to bring the fight back out.* Billy chuckled and he watched Steve with an unwavering gaze. Steve was brought back to the parking lot with drifts of snow piling on the sidewalk, brought back to watching the people he cared about enjoy life for the night, before he went back home to stare at the pool.

“Then what is it?” Billy asked, breaking the memory. Steve still couldn’t look away.

“I wanted to come.”

Steve hadn’t felt anything at the time when he had driven to the quarry, hadn’t felt the cold when he waited on his hood for Billy to arrive, but maybe he had felt a little something when he heard the

Camaro roaring down the road. Now he wanted to be there. He felt it, burning in his gut. The burning reminded his body of the unforgiving March cold, and he shivered, breaking away from Billy's gaze. Billy's leg remained pressed to him, a tether to present reality. Steve stared at it, the burning from his gut diffusing and radiating warmth along his chest and throat and eyes.

"What changed," Steve asked, whispering it towards Billy's leg. Billy shifted again, but he didn't move away. It brought something quick and prudent to Steve's throat, and he swallowed. The silence dragged on, and Steve realized Billy wasn't going to respond. It wasn't the first time Steve had been wrong about something that involved Billy.

"I like to think I changed," Billy said. "But really I don't know what the fuck I'm doing anymore."

Steve heard the spite in Billy's voice. Steve furrowed his brows, thinking.

"You're working at the shop, yeah?" Billy grunted in affirmation. "I've seen you there," Steve said looking up and out over the quarry. *I've noticed you trying.*

"Been watching me, pretty boy?" Steve ignored the comment and continued.

"You're grades are fucking great. And I haven't seen you yell at Max since that night." Billy gave a warning growl low in his throat. Steve's hair stood up on his neck, but he didn't stop. Steve knew of Billy's darkness, of Billy's monsters. A part of Steve had probably always known, and had calmed him when he looked into the eyes of mindless rage that night. Steve took a breath. "You have bruises sometimes, still, I see them after practice. He's an asshole." Billy abruptly sat up and slid off the hood, spitting a "You're bullshit, Harrington" over one shoulder as he walked back to his car. The words hurt, memory still fresh, until a wall of nothing settled over Steve's mind. Still, Steve keenly felt the March cold on his thigh, but he didn't have the energy to call back the inner warmth from moments before. *He is important an capable of this... no one else will lift*

him up if I don't try. Steve felt a whisper of sadness at the thought. "I think you're trying to be who you want to be, rather than what you've been told you are... or should be."

Steve wasn't even sure if Billy had heard him. He couldn't hear the man's footsteps across the dirt. The words, the thoughts, and everything that had weighed itself on Steve's shoulders bore down. Steve wasn't sure if he cared anymore. There was a softness of sound in cold weather. Nothing stirred in the darkness. Steve couldn't feel much of anything as the seconds drifted by. Steve let his eyes fall closed and he rested his head against the windshield. He wondered distantly what would happen if he fell asleep here.

"I came out here to see what the fuck is wrong with you, and instead I end up getting a philosophical earful about your opinions of me," Billy snarled right beside him, standing with one arm on the Beamer, his face up close to Steve's. Steve jumped slightly and opened his eyes to Billy's electric blues. "That's not why I'm here, pretty boy." His breath was warm on Steve's lips.

Who am I kidding. I'll always care, Steve thought, staring at Billy's curls and sharp jawline. Into his blue, blue eyes.

"Why are you here," Steve whispered. It held nothing; no heat, no irritation, no curiosity. Steve couldn't comprehend the face Billy made at that, but it made Steve feel slightly nauseous.

Billy leaned back from Steve. "Because I want to." He rounded the car in easy strides before scooting back onto the hood. He pressed his leg firmly onto Steve's again, and his arm came down over Steve's shoulders as he lit his nth smoke of the night. Steve sighed, out of exasperation or exhaustion or gratitude, he wasn't sure. He wasn't sure of much today.

It turned out that the heat across his shoulders and whole left side was enough to put him to sleep, face pressed into Billy's shoulder. It smelled like cologne and sweat and Billy. Steve didn't think about the fact he knew Billy's personal scent.

Billy gently shook him up an hour later and Steve woke for the first time in months without startling or screaming. Steve stared at Billy in awe, and he chuckled when he saw the discomfort clear in the lines of his face.

From then on, they met at the quarry every other night. There were nights when Billy didn't show. Steve made sure to mentally document the bruises the next day. He would nod at Billy's fierce sneer, beginning to recognize his slight signs of guilt in the clench of his jaw.

The next memory was of the first time Billy had spent the night at Steve's place. It had been when Steve didn't make it to the quarry for the first time. As Steve stood in the middle of his graduation party, he realized it had only been a week ago. It had been a rough night, to say the least.

Steve didn't know what had compelled him to answer the phone at 2:00am that night. Now, as he thought back, he was glad that he had.

"Hello," Steve had breathed, attempting to calm his heart. There were monsters in the dark.

"Harrington, is that you?" Billy's rough tone made Steve close his eyes and hold the phone closer. He made a noncommittal noise in the back of his throat, breathing heavily through his nose. "What's going on? Rub one off too hard?" Steve squeezed his eyes, trying desperately to keep the panic under wraps. "Where were you? I waited for fucking—" Billy cursed and lowered his voice. "I waited for two hours, Harrington, two fucking hours, and we have tests tomorrow, what the fuck is your problem." Steve couldn't breathe, and he opened his mouth, inhaling sharply over the phone. "Are you *crying*—"

"Gotta go," Steve choked, "I'm sorry." He hung up the phone with

enough force to startle himself. He was shaking, sweat dripping down his neck and chest. He sat down there in the kitchen, raking his fingers through his hair over and over, taking great breaths through his mouth and attempting to count with them. Like Joyce had taught him in December. He stood and paced, then collapsed and shuddered, and stood again. He repeated the cycle for what felt like his whole existence. The panic was crackling just under the surface, ready to break and send him down to depths he couldn't swim from. That he couldn't protect anyone anymore. That everyone he knew would die from their own monsters, and he couldn't do anything about it. That there were teeth hidden in the flowers outside. That every shadow held the cold, monstrous entity that had emotionally and mentally raped a thirteen year old.

Steve paced and paced and stopped to heave over his knees, finding himself stuck in the tunnels with Max and Dustin and Mike and Lucas—and the demodogs were coming. But they were still in the center of the vines, and he couldn't stand in front of them all, he couldn't shield them all with his own body, he couldn't *get them out of this hell*.

A hand grasped Steve's arm and Steve looked to find the children's bodies being devoured and ripped apart and whose hand was that and Steve was screaming and scrabbling to get away, *fuck, I have to get away, that didn't happen, please it didn't happen*.

Steve heard loudness beside him, felt hands on his arms. In a cutting stroke of realization, Steve found himself with tears dripping off his chin and grating sobs in his chest. He was leaning entirely on Billy, supported by two hands firm on his shoulders. His legs gave out and he crumpled into the carpet. His chest was heaving as he tried to crawl away. *It's Billy, it's just Billy*, Steve thought, but his heart wouldn't slow down, the instinct to run too strong. He ended up scooting less than a foot away, and curled his arms over his head. Steve couldn't become small enough.

Firm, hot arms wrapped gently from behind Steve, resting over his bent knees and squeezing. Billy's legs encircled him. Steve continued

to sob hoarsely into his arms. He tried to calm down. It was hard, but Billy's arms were strong under his fingers. He went through the tunnels over and over in rapid flashes, and he saw the kids walking away from him, saw Nancy and Jonathan kissing and holding each other to escape the darkness, and Steve's own pool sat still and cold in the night.

Steve thought and thought until he didn't have the energy anymore. He began to breath deeply, *in, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four...* He smelled Billy, the scent warm in his head. He realized that Billy had been counting breaths with him. Steve coughed, wet and tired and rubbed at his face. His breath shook as he took one last deep inhalation.

"You back," Billy breathed, the words hot on the back of Steve's neck. Steve couldn't speak. He nodded. Billy arms stayed around him, curled like a safety net, refusing to let him go too deep. Steve rested his cheek, damp and sticky from tears, on Billy's bicep. His lashes brushed Billy's skin as he blinked into the calm, organized living room. "Good." Billy's voice vibrated into Steve's back. Steve wasn't imagining the thumbs brushing over his knees, or the relief in the deep sigh behind him. Steve relished the feeling of Billy's forehead against his shoulder.

Billy forced Steve to get up and shower less than ten minutes later. Steve had groused lightly and let Billy follow him to the bathroom. Before Steve could get the words out, Billy said, "I'll be here when you get out," with his hands shoved in his pockets to pull out a cigarette and lighter. As Billy tended to do, he caught Steve's gaze as he said it.

"Don't smoke inside," Steve said, trying to hide his overwhelming gratitude. Billy smirked and Steve think he may have failed.

Later, the boys collapsed into Steve's bed without any discussion. And Billy wrapped his arms around Steve as if it was just as comforting for him as it was for Steve.

He woke Steve two hours later before he left.

In the present, Steve sipped his wine and thought back through finals week and their nightly quarry meetings. They had met the following night as usual. And then they had The Discussion. Surprisingly, Billy had believed Steve with only a few snide comments, a tribute to their newfound closeness. Steve felt a weight lift from his shoulders, and he shared the prickle of fear about the people who could crush them and their families. He told Billy about how he had fought Nancy about telling Barb's parents. That it had helped destroy their relationship. And Billy had laughed and clapped him over the shoulder.

"Really, Harrington? Fucking government isn't going to put an end to me." Billy's eyes glittered, and Steve was spellbound. "I won't go spewing shit, Steve. I won't put you in danger like that. Or the little shits." Steve felt his throat close and he whipped his head to stare into the dark trees beside the quarry. He felt fingers on his neck, and swallowed as they traced his skin to his chin. Without warning, Billy turned Steve's head back towards him and pressed his lips to Steve's. Steve remained frozen for a moment-- eyes open and locked on the blue of comets and lightning and ocean surf--before he moved into the man and watched those eyes close gently.

Now, here Steve was, reminiscing and being a bit of an ass with an empty glass in hand. A certain track started playing and Steve inhaled deeply, something stirring in his chest. Susan glanced up at Steve and smiled sweetly. "Steve, sweetie, why aren't you outside with your friends?" Billy turned around as if he hadn't known Steve was there.

Wise men say... only fools rush in.

Steve avoided Billy's gaze.

“Just taking a breather,” Steve said, walking forward to refill his glass.

But I can't help falling in love with you

“Alright,” Susan said, giving a sweet smile and a sultry look to Billy. It made Steve roll his eyes, and also made him stifle a chuckle. She did that to all men. “You should entertain your guests, though. Go outside soon.” Susan floated out of the kitchen and outside, instantly an image of perfection and power and she swayed across to Chief Hopper.

“She’s one hell of a woman,” Billy said, whistling. Steve gave an agreeing hum as he sipped his refilled glass.

Would it be a sin if I can't help falling in love with you?

Billy leaned across the counter, obviously trying to get Steve’s attention. Steve refused to look. Something was stirring wildly, and Steve didn’t want to address it just yet. Didn’t think he wanted to open that door.

“Hey,” Billy whispered. Steve instantly looked to him, cursing himself.

Take my hand, take my whole heart too...

“Yeah?” Steve returned just as quietly. Billy slowly rounded the counter and took Steve’s forearms with his hands. Steve inhaled sharply, his eyes wide. “Everyone’s right outside, why—“ Billy released one arm and bopped Steve over the head, enough to make Steve wince lightly.

“Then don’t be so obvious, pretty boy.”

Darling, so it goes, some things are meant to be.

“I’m trying to make a point, here,” Billy continued.

Take my hand,

“What point is that?” Steve breathed, stepping closer to Billy, eyes flitting from the open shirt, to the glittering earring, to those blue eyes.

Take my whole life too.

Billy stared hard at Steve, squeezing his forearms hard and swaying gently on the spot. To Steve’s utter surprise, Billy mouthed the next lines. “I can’t help falling in love with you.” Steve flushed and watched as heat traveled down Billy’s neck and chest, too.

Steve forced his lips to move, gently singing aloud the last line of the song, “for I can’t help.... Falling in love... with you.” Billy’s mouth dropped open, before he covered his emotions with a wicked grin.

“Knew it,” he cackled, laughing as Steve blushed and tried to calm his pounding heart.

“Fuck you,” Steve spat without heat, pulling his arms free and grabbing his wine. He threw his head back and chugged the rest of it. Billy only laughed harder. Sighing and raking a hand through his hair, Steve began to walk by Billy, deciding it was finally time to join the party. Billy, still chuckling, stopped him with a soft touch to his hip, and Steve turned just in time to catch a firm kiss to the corner of his mouth.

“Can’t help it,” Billy said. He was grinning and sticking his tongue

between his teeth, but his eyes were soft. Steve wasn't sure if he was referring to the song lyrics or the kiss. As he gave a small smile and murmured, "me either," he decided it was probably both.

Author's Note:

Comments always make me sing!~~